

Maryland Voices: Volume VII captures teens' unique perspectives

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It is the end of the school year, and my 2009-2010 journalism team is having their year-end bash, celebrating the last issue of this school year, which is also their first issue as a newspaper staff. Our A&E editor is dancing to a self-selected mix of Madonna and Michael Jackson while our online team meets with laptops open to discuss the latest changes to the website design for summer coverage.

Amidst the loud music and homemade cupcakes, another dedicated team huddles around one of the remaining working computers in the back of the room. Their celebration is on hold at least another day or so, however, as they work tirelessly to put the finishing touches on Volume VII of *Maryland Voices*, the only creative nonfiction publication of its kind in the country

for high school writers.

Maryland Voices began 8 years ago as an attempt to capture the reactions to and reflections on the terrorist attacks carried out on September 11, 2001. Since then, the publication has been student-centered, run by a high school editorial team comprising writers in Howard and surrounding counties. Now in its seventh volume, *Maryland Voices* continues to showcase the best creative nonfiction written by high school writers around the state.

This year's editorial team plans on releasing this volume in early autumn, 2009, at their third annual statewide conference in creative nonfiction.

Students and teachers may learn more about creative nonfiction and submit their original pieces for Volume VIII

as early as October at the conference. Submission forms and other pertinent information, including examples from previous volumes of *Maryland Voices*, can be found at www.marylandvoices.com. We encourage all high school writers to submit their work; there is no submission fee, and we love working with writers to help them with their entries. Contact Rus VanWestervelt at 443-834-9489 or at marylandvoices@gmail.com for more information. We're interested in working with teachers and school systems around the state to incorporate creative non-fiction into existing curricula and have you join our editorial team.

Help us allow our students to share the stories that define their lives, their generation!

The Girl in the Forest of Fontainebleau

Katelyn Wertsch, 11th grade Havre de Grace High School, www.marylandvoices.com

I wandered aimlessly through the classically furnished halls of the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, passing small rooms filled with big paintings of lives lived and memories forgotten. As I walked in no clear direction, I traveled through different worlds, from Classical Europe to ancient Greece, from the mystical Oriental to the familiar American. Nothing much entered my mind on the journey; I just watched the cameos of unknown faces as they returned my blank, lifeless stares. I came here on a hunt for inspiration, or so my writing instructor had worded it, before he shooed us into all different directions of the vast building encompassing art from all over the world that I had yet to experience first-hand. My class and I, students of a week long creative arts camp, were taken to DC for an enriching creative

experience to finish our week of arts classes in various disciplines. Mine so happened to be writing.

I didn't know what I was looking for, but I thought that maybe that was the point, to be lost in a sea of feelings from eras past. I wondered, as I circled a sculpture of a beautiful Grecian woman posed in an awkwardly graceful position—which made me curious as to how uncomfortable she would be if she were real—whether her sculptor would be enthusiastic if he knew I was using his muse as my own. I would probably be thrilled that the world hadn't forgotten about me. I uninterestedly jotted some lines down into my black, leather bound journal with the pen that I stowed in my pocket that morning, and ventured on to new sights.

I looked at various paintings, some of them abstract, some of them still life, and my mind slowly wandered elsewhere, as it often did, back in time to the worst day of my life. No longer realizing where I was or what I was supposed to be doing, I sat on a blue, stiff couch and wandered back through my memories. In them, I saw my brother, David, sitting with me on his bed listening to music as if the day were as normal as any other.

'His laughter came out in loud gasps, forcing me to laugh along with him, even though my laughs sounded forced and constricted. I looked at him curiously, and asked him, "Are you scared?"

Pick up a copy of *Maryland Voices* Vol. VII to read the conclusion of Katelyn's story and to see the passion and perspectives of the youth of Maryland.